

POLIO TO AIDS: THE POLITICS OF DISEASE IN RECENT U.S. HISTORY

**HONORS SEMINAR
HSS 491 H08**

SPRING 2005 SYLLABUS

**Stephen Pemberton, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Federated Department of History
New Jersey Institute of Technology and Rutgers University, Newark**

Class Meetings

*GITC 1203, NJIT Campus
10–11: 25 a.m. Mondays and Thursdays*

Office & Contact

*Cullimore Hall 324, NJIT Campus
Phone: 973-596-5716
Email: stephen.pemberton@njit.edu*

Office Hours

Mondays 1–3 p.m. and by appointment

This course examines the problem of disease in the history of 20th century medicine and society. Through a case study approach, students will learn about people's changing experiences of disease, transformations in biomedical understanding of disease, as well as shifts in clinical and public health practice over time. The historical case studies examine infectious diseases (from polio to AIDS) as well as non-infectious maladies (like cancer, diabetes, organ failure, and sickle cell anemia). Readings and discussions focus on the political and cultural dimensions of disease control efforts. We will examine how medical and public health professionals, private philanthropy, government funding, disease foundations, and patient advocacy have combated disease and promoted health throughout the 20th-century. We will also analyze the ways that class, race, gender, and sexuality have impacted these efforts. The geographical focus of the course will be on the United States with some limited comparison to other countries.

Readings. The required reading for this course includes four books and a coursepack of shorter readings. The books are available at New Jersey Books located at University and Bleeker. Details on obtaining the coursepack are available from the professor. A full bibliography of the course readings appears at the end of this syllabus. The four main readings for the course are:

Tom Andrews, *The Codeine Diary* (Harvest Publication, 1999)

Steven Epstein, *Impure Science: AIDS, Activism, and the Politics of Knowledge* (University of California Press, 1998)

Barron Lerner, *The Breast Cancer Wars: Hope, Fear, and the Pursuit of a Cure in Twentieth-Century America* (Oxford University Press, 2003)

Keith Wailoo, *Dying in the City of the Blues: Sickle Cell Anemia and the Politics of Race & Health* (University of North Carolina Press, 2001)

Assignments and Grading

All students will be evaluated on their written and oral communication over the course of the semester. Please be mindful that it is a primary goal of this course to promote critical thinking about American medicine and society, both past and present.

Participation. The class participation grade will reflect the student's in-class performance in both their oral and written comments. The student should come to class prepared to discuss the assigned reading. The success of the seminar format actually depends on this. Attendance is also mandatory. Active participation in class will improve course grade. Moreover, students who choose not to participate in class risk being penalized. There are also severe penalties for absenteeism, tardiness, and/or early exits from the classroom. 15% of the final grade is devoted to participation.

The student will write three papers in this course.

First Essay. The first written assignment of the semester will involve finding a primary document about a disease problem in the first half of the twentieth-century and writing a 3-4 page essay about it. The essay will place the document in historical context and discuss its significance. The essay will be due on Feb. 10. Guidelines for this writing assignment will be distributed at least a week in advance of the due date. The essay counts for 10% of the final grade.

Second Essay. The second written assignment in the course will discuss one of two books assigned in the course. Each student will decide whether they want to write about the history of sickle cell disease as told in Keith Wailoo's *Dying in the City of the Blues* (due Feb. 24) or the history of breast cancer as told in Barron Lerner's *The Breast Cancer Wars* (due Mar. 24). The essays will be 5-7 pages long, and will reflect on a central theme or issue raised in one of these books. Guidelines for each essay will be distributed at least a week in advance of the due date. [Each student need only write on one of these books, however, every student will have the option of writing essays on both books and taking the higher grade.] This essay counts for 25% of the final grade.

Final Essay. The final essay in this course will treat the history of the AIDS epidemic in the United States in 10-15 pages. Each student will determine their topic in consultation with the professor, and work on the paper over the course of the last month of the semester (April). The essay will be due May 5. Guidelines for this assignment will be distributed at the end of March. This essay counts for 40% of the final grade.

Presentations. During the final two weeks of the semester, we will conduct a mini-conference amongst ourselves that treats the history of AIDS in the United States. Each student will introduce their findings from their final essay projects in a 8-10 minute presentation. As a class, we will have a discussion of the issues raised by each student's project after they present. Attendance at all the presentations is mandatory. The presentation counts for 10% of the final grade.

Assignments and Due Dates

Participation	15%	
First Essay	10%	February 10
Second Essay	25%	February 24 <u>or</u> March 24
Presentation	10%	April 21-May 2, schedule to be determined
Final Essay	40%	May 5
Course Grade	<u>100%</u>	

The Honor Code and Plagiarism

The honor code and academic integrity are enforced in this course. You will be required to submit your essays to Turnitin.com, an online service used by NJIT to detect plagiarism. Details for using the service will be provided along with guidelines for the first writing assignment.

Respect for Persons and the Learning Environment

In the interest of an open exchange of ideas and collegiality, everyone participating in the seminar should strive to respect their classmates as persons. The professor will make every effort to facilitate a respectful environment for learning, but students should keep in mind their own responsibilities in the class room.

Students who have special needs or concerns that might impact their learning experience should feel free to raise or discuss their situation with the professor. The professor will hold all private communication in confidence.

Semester Schedule

Thurs, Jan 20. Introductions

Mon, Jan 24. Infectious Disease in Twentieth-Century America

For starred readings (*), please refer to coursepack.

Reading: *Judith Walzer Leavitt, “‘Be Safe. Be Sure.’ New York City’s Experience with Smallpox,” 95-114.

Thurs, Jan 27. Sister Kenny and Infantile Paralysis

In-Class Movie: *Sister Kenny* (1946, Excerpts)

Readings: *Victor Cohn, “A Nurse’s Revolution,” 3-11; *Naomi Rogers, “Sister Kenny Goes to Washington,” 98-116.

Mon, Jan 31. FDR & the National Foundation of Infantile Paralysis

Readings: *Naomi Rogers, “A Disease of Cleanliness: Polio in New York City, 1900-1990,” 115-130; *Jane Smith, “Paralysis, Politics, and Money,” 31-87.

Thurs, Feb 3. Polio and the Salk Vaccine I

Readings: ; *Jane Smith, “Fear, Courage, and the Care of Little Children,” 19-26; *Jane Smith, “Polio Pioneers,” 265-274; *Alton Blakeslee, *Polio Can Be Conquered* (1949), 1-13; *Alton Blakeslee, *Polio and the Salk Vaccine: What You Should Know About It* (1956), 30-43.

Mon, Feb 7. Polio and the Salk Vaccine II

Readings: *Aaron Klein, “The Sting of the Needle,” 102-126; *Aaron Klein, “Epilogue,” 152-158; *Allan Brandt, “Polio, Politics, Publicity, and Duplicity,” 451-457; *Naomi Rogers, “Polio Since FDR,” 165-190.

Thurs, Feb 10. Framing Disease in History

First Essay Due (Primary Document)

Mon, Feb 14. Chronic Disease

Reading: Wailoo, *Dying in the City of the Blues*, 1-106.

Thurs, Feb 17. Race and Disease in 20th Century America

Reading: Wailoo, *Dying in the City of the Blues*, 107-196.

Mon, Feb 21. Sickle Cell Disease

Reading: Wailoo, *Dying in the City of the Blues*, 197-234.

Thurs, Feb 24. What Can We Learn From the History of Sickle Cell Disease?

Sickle Cell Disease Essay Due

Mon, Feb 28. Cancer in Twentieth Century America

Reading: Lerner, *Breast Cancer Wars*, 3-91.

Thurs, Mar 3. Breast Cancer & the Radical Mastectomy

Reading: Lerner, *Breast Cancer Wars*, 92-169.

Mon, Mar 7. The Patient in History

Reading: *Leopold, *A Darker Ribbon*, 85-150.

Thurs, Mar 10. Breast Cancer Activism

Reading: Lerner, *Breast Cancer Wars*, 170-195 and *Lorde, *The Cancer Journals*, 507-512.

Mon, Mar 14. No Class – Spring Break

Thurs, Mar 17. No Class – Spring Break

Mon, Mar 21. Breast Cancer, Then & Now

Reading: Lerner, *Breast Cancer Wars*, 196-295

Thurs, Mar 24. What Does the History of Breast Cancer Teach Us?

Breast Cancer Essay Due

Mon, Mar 28. Disease & Technology

Reading: Andrews, *Codeine Diary*, 1-82.

Thurs, Mar 31. The AIDS Epidemic I

In-Class Movie: *And The Band Played On* [Excerpts]

Readings: *Bayer, "The Dependent Center: The First Decade of the AIDS Epidemic in New York City," 131-150; *Bayer, "Blood and AIDS in America," 19-54.

Mon, Apr 4. Living with Chronic Illness: Before & After AIDS

Reading: Andrews, *Codeine Diary*, 83-236.

Thurs, Apr 7. The AIDS Epidemic II

In-Class Movie: *Common Threads: Stories from the Quilt* [Excerpts]

Reading: Epstein, *Impure Science*, 45-104

Mon, Apr 11. AIDS Controversies: The Politics of Causation

Reading: Epstein, *Impure Science*, 105-180.

Thurs, Apr 14. AIDS Controversies: The Politics of Treatment I

Reading: Epstein, *Impure Science*, 181-264.

Mon, Apr 18. AIDS Controversies: The Politics of Treatment II

Reading: Epstein, *Impure Science*, 265-353

Thurs, Apr 21. Presentations on AIDS and Its History

Mon, Apr 25. Presentations on AIDS and Its History

Thurs, Apr 28. Presentations on AIDS and Its History

Mon, May 2. Presentations and Conclusions

Thurs, May 5. Final Papers Due

Course Bibliography

Books

Tom Andrews, *The Codeine Diary* (Harvest Publication, 1999)

Steven Epstein, *Impure Science: AIDS, Activism, and the Politics of Knowledge* (University of California Press, 1998)

Barron Lerner, *The Breast Cancer Wars: Hope, Fear, and the Pursuit of a Cure in Twentieth-Century America* (Oxford University Press, 2003)

Keith Wailoo, *Dying in the City of the Blues: Sickle Cell Anemia and the Politics of Race & Health* (University of North Carolina Press, 2001)

Journal Articles and Book Chapters [in Coursepack]

Ronald Bayer, "Blood and AIDS in America," in Eric A. Feldman and Ronald Bayer, eds. *Blood Feuds: AIDS, Blood, and the Politics of Medical Disaster* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 19-54.

Ronald Bayer, "The Dependent Center: The First Decade of the AIDS Epidemic in New York City," in David Rosner, ed. *Hives of Sickness: Public Health and Epidemics in New York City* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 131-150

Alton L. Blakeslee, *Polio Can Be Conquered* (NY: Public Affairs Committee, 1949), 1-13.

Alton L. Blakeslee, *Polio and the Salk Vaccine: What You Should Know About It* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1956), 30-43.

Allan M. Brandt, "Polio, Politics, Publicity, and Duplicity: The Salk Vaccine and the Protection of the Public," (1978) excerpted in John Harley Warner and Janet Tighe, eds. *Major Problems in the History of American Medicine and Public Health* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2001), 451-457.

Victor Cohn, "A Nurse's Revolution," in *Sister Kenny: The Woman Who Challenged the Doctors* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1975), 3-11.

Aaron Klein, "The Sting of the Needle" and "Epilogue" in *Trial By Fury: The Polio Vaccine Controversy* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972), 102-126, 152-158.

Judith Walzer Leavitt, "'Be Safe. Be Sure.' New York City's Experience with Smallpox," in David Rosner, ed. *Hives of Sickness: Public Health and Epidemics in New York City* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 95-114.

Ellen Leopold, "Part II" [Chapters 3 & 4] of *A Darker Ribbon: Breast Cancer, Women, and Their Doctors in the Twentieth Century* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999), 85-150.

Audre Lorde, *The Cancer Journals* (1980) excerpted [as “Patient Audre Lorde Confronts Breast Cancer Treatment] in John Harley Warner and Janet Tighe, eds. *Major Problems in the History of American Medicine and Public Health* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2001), 507-512.

Naomi Rogers, “A Disease of Cleanliness: Polio in New York City, 1900-1990,” in David Rosner, ed. *Hives of Sickness: Public Health and Epidemics in New York City* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 115-130.

Naomi Rogers, “Sister Kenny Goes to Washington: Polio, Populism, and Medical Politics in Postwar America,” in Robert D. Johnson, ed. *The Politics of Healing: Histories of Alternative Medicine in Twentieth-Century North America* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 98-116.

Naomi Rogers, “Epilogue: Polio Since FDR,” in *Dirt and Disease: Polio Before FDR* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 165-190.

Jane S. Smith, “Fear, Courage, and the Care of Little Children,” “Paralysis, Politics, and Money,” and “Polio Pioneers,” in *Patenting the Sun: Polio and the Salk Vaccine* (New York: Morrow and Co., 1990), 19-26, 31-87, 265-274.